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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9927
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE
 S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000289
 SIPDIS
 STATE FOR NEA/MAG
 E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2029
 TAGS: PREL PINR SCUL KISL IR SA EG MO
SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: XXXXXXXXXXX LINKS MOROCCAN
 BREAK WITH IRAN TO SAUDI ARABIA
 REF: A. RABAT 0196
 1B. RABAT 0205
1C. RABAT 0230
1D. CASABLANCA 47
 TE. RABAT 0247
TF. KARP/DESK EMAIL 30 MAR 2009
 Classified By: PolCouns Craig Karp for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
11. (S/NF) Summary: Morocco broke diplomatic relations with
Iran and began a campaign against its domestic Shi'a minority
at Saudi Arabian instigation, according to XXXXXXXXXXXX
According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, Tehran had been using Morocco
and its Embassy in Rabat for activities in Mali and Senegal. Domestically, XXXXXXXXXXX emphasized that the anti-Shi'a campaign was aimed at ne
13. (S/NF) XXXXXXXXXXX said goading Iran, a country
Mith which it had limited economic interests, and demonizing the Shi'a, a powerless minority group, was a small price for Morocco to pay for a strategy that could have major payoffs. He added that the King was "killing several birds with one stone" with his actions, and was also seeking to reassert his position as Commander of the Faithful (Note: Supreme religious leader for the Moroccan Malachite branch of Sunni Islam. End Note.).
14. (S/NF) According to XXXXXXXXXXXXX, Iran has sought to increase the influence of Shi'ism in West Africa, where Tehran had been using Morocco (which is a regional air hub) and its Embassy in Rabat as a jumping off point for activities in Mali and Senegal. A former Iranian ambassador was also apparently travelling to Tangier, Tetouan and other cities in Morocco to lecture and identify promising young religious students from the Shi'a community for familiarization visits to, and further training in, Iran.
15. (S/NF) Mohammed VI apparently saw this as a personal affront to him and a direct challenge to his religious and economic authority. (Note: Contributions from the wealthy Tijani sect in Senegal and Mali augment Palace coffers. Many Muslims in West Africa look to the Moroccan Monarch as their religious leader. End Note). Although XXXXXXXXXXXX did not provide any basis for the supposition, XXXXXXXXXXXX said XXXXXXXXXX believed that Mohammed VI had probably been planning his move for at least a year. XXXXXXXXXX also speculated that the Palace was also worried about the prospect of Moroccan foreign fighters returning from Iraq, possibly having been recruited and trained by Iran, and slipping into Iranian networks in Morocco.
16. (S/NF) Domestically, XXXXXXXXXXX emphasized that the anti-Shi'a campaign was also directed at dissident Islamic group Adl Wa Ihsane (The Justice and Good Works Organization) which has recently signaled its desire to become a legitimate political party. The group, which has at times called for the abolishment of the monarchy and the establishment of an Islamic republic, is believed to have wide popularity among poor and middle class populations unhappy with the political system, which they view as corrupt. XXXXXXXXXXXX said that the Palace is trying to be "more conservative than the fundamentalists" in a bid to neutralize their drawing power.
 17. (S/NF) On the Doha conference (Ref E and F), XXXXXXXXXXX said
 RABAT 00000289 002 OF 002
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Jackson